

Conference Abstract

How Mass Digitization is changing Herbarium Collection Management at the Botanic Garden Meise (BR) - Teaching old dogs new tricks!

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Received: 11 Aug 2017 | Published: 11 Aug 2017

Citation: Engledow H, De Smedt S, Groom Q, Bogaerts A, Stoffelen P, Sosef M, Van Wambeke P, Dessein S (2017) How Mass Digitization is changing Herbarium Collection Management at the Botanic Garden Meise (BR) – Teaching old dogs new tricks! Proceedings of TDWG 1: e20194.

<https://doi.org/10.3897/tdwgproceedings.1.20194>

Abstract

The Botanic Garden Meise (BR) has been involved in a mass digitization project over the past 2.5 years. At present, over 1.2 million herbarium specimens have been imaged. A third of these images already have minimal data, while the remainder data are presently being captured and should be finished in the coming months. Many lessons have been learned along the way with respect to the pitfalls of implementing mass digitization, both technically and sociologically. Mass digitization has also fundamentally changed the management workflow of our collections. This includes the creation of new protocols to ensure that new and returning material be photographed before being incorporated into already digitized collections, thus ensuring that data are not lost.

A new portal has been created following an independent analysis of user requirements. This will result in increased visibility of our collections, making them more discoverable. The new portal provides additional functionality, including unique stable Uniform Resource Identifiers (URI) for each specimen and a machine readable version of the data. These identifiers follow the recommendations of the Consortium of European Taxonomic Facilities (<http://cetaf.org/cetaf-stable-identifiers>). The identifiers are a valuable tool and resource for

researchers, but it is incumbent upon them to use this resource responsibly for the citation of specimens.

Many research staff have not been actively involved in the mass digitization exercise and need to be educated on its impact and importance. As more and more images and data are linked to publications, they become easier to evaluate and verify. These digital data may also be repurposed in other studies, thus advancing science and herbarium management. As an increased number of institutions place their collections online, the greater this resource becomes for both collection management as well as research, particularly as links between collections become apparent. These links may include improved georeferencing, establishing collector itineraries, and new determinations for duplicate specimens.

Keywords

mass digitisation, collection management workflow, unique stable URI, georeferencing, herbarium

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